

Submission to the Senate in relation to a Bill for an Act to amend the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 and for related purposes

This Act may be cited as the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment Act 2013

1. I strongly support the Bill and would like to see it passed quickly through the Senate.
2. I am pleased that the bilateral approval provisions of the EPBC Act cannot apply to coal and coal seam gas developments that impact on water resources, and that there have been some improvements to the exemptions.
3. I want to ensure that the exemptions contained in the Bill are minimised, and that key projects, such as the Arrow Coal Seam Gas project in Queensland and Camden in western Sydney, are not exempt from it. Therefore, I would still like to see the removal of s22 2b) and d).
4. I recognise that there are other amendments that would substantially improve the Bill, that may be required in the future, pending consultation with the electorate, such as:
 - Amending the Bill to cover all unconventional gas mining, including shale gas and tight gas, and unconventional coal mining
 - Strengthening the role of the Independent Expert Scientific Committee
 - Defining significant impacts on water resources
 - Introducing a set of requirements for the Minister to consider when making decisions on water resource impacts
 - Including a requirement for bioregional assessments prior to approval

I therefore call on the Senate to pass this Bill to prevent / minimize further damage to Australia's natural resources and to call for the immediate cessation / suspension of all activities within the prescribed areas as defined by the Bill and which are referred to by the Bill.

I also ask the Senate to acknowledge the work carried out by Lock The Gate Alliance & the work of Brian Monk in identifying to the People Of Australia the damage caused by the activities covered by the Bill, and in their five central aims:

1. To protect Australia's water systems.
2. To protect Australia's agricultural land for food and fibre production.
3. To protect Australia's bushlands, wetlands and wildlife.
4. To protect the health of all Australians.
5. To protect Australia's Aboriginal and cultural heritage.

Gary Patton